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## Military Family Month: Get to know your Ombudsman

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Military Family Month – Lt. Michael White is welcomed home by his family after a six month deployment aboard the USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) (U.S. Navy photo by Jacob Sippel/Released)

November is [Military Family Month](#) and Navy Medicine values the critical role our families play in ensuring the readiness of Sailors and Marines. The support they provide and the daily sacrifices they make are a testament to their selflessness and the commitment to our service members.

Our families are an essential component to the success our world-wide mission. We are committed to supporting our family members in return by providing valuable programs and resources, such as the Ombudsman Program.

[Created in 1970, the Ombudsman Program](#) is designed to promote healthy, self-reliant families within the Navy. The command-operated program intends to improve the communication between the command and a Sailor's family. Appointed by the commanding officer, the ombudsman is a volunteer acting as a link between the family and the command. For a family member, the command ombudsman is an invaluable resource.



Tawsha Burkhart is the  
BUMED  
command ombudsman

Tawsha Burkhart is the U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) command ombudsman. In honor of Military Family Month, the BUMED public affairs office met with Ms. Burkhart to highlight how she supports the families of Navy Medicine.

### **What is an ombudsman?**

*An ombudsman is a family member who volunteer's to represent the needs of all of the families in the command. We are the link between families and command leadership. We advocate for families, and we provide information, resources and outreach to family members.*

### **What does an ombudsman do to advocate for families?**

*The ombudsman serves as a central point of contact within the command. We are the direct line of communication to command leadership for all concerns involving the family. We also provide resources for families within the command. For example, if a family needs a child care provider, we would provide them the information they need in finding one. If a family is experiencing financial difficulties we can help point them in the right direction. We're here for our family members 24 hours a day, seven days a week.*

### **Why did you volunteer to become the command ombudsman?**

*Helping people is a passion of mine. This is my way of saying thank you – by helping our Navy families in any way possible. It's an honor and a privilege to give back and help our families.*

### **An ombudsman has the unique perspective of also being a Navy Medicine family member. Why do you think it's important to take the time to thank the families who support our Sailors and Marines?**

*Our families are the backbone of the Navy; we support our Sailors in their mission. I know that family members get acknowledgement from their spouses, but when family members are acknowledged by the*

*command, it makes them feel like they have achieved something.*

## What do you hope to accomplish as the command ombudsman?

*My primary goal is helping our families. It is a privilege and an honor to help family members when they need something the most. I want to be the type of ombudsman our family members know and feel comfortable seeking in their moment of need. It doesn't matter if it's 3:00 a.m. and I'm sleeping. I don't want them to feel like they are bothering me, because they won't be.*

The Ombudsman Program is one of the many U.S. Navy and Navy Medicine programs available to the families of Sailors and Marines. Make an effort to get to know your ombudsman. Find information on the Ombudsman Program, including how to locate your command ombudsman, on the [Commander, Navy Installations Command webpage](#)

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